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Greens

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BY

G. P. G.



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SPRING-COMING.

WELCOME to thee, thou fair one,
That breaks the land's long sleep
With the balmy waft of thy breathing,
Anew love's tryst to keep!
The grasses beneath thy footsteps
Athwart the crusted snow —
That sparkles with ruby and chrysolite —
Have heard thy tread below.
The race of the russet orchard —
Whose trust so long delayed —
Stand flushed with a dream enchanted,
The blue of thy heaven hath made.
I know, saith the violet pining,
Soft kisses me await.
All wistful yearn in their cloister
The crocuses at the gate, —
Methought I heard a warbling!
Ah, yea! it is so! it is so!
Right welcome to thee, fair mistress!
Farewell, sweet one of the snow!

.
Once more the lanes are free,
The white fleet sails o'erhead;
The south wind sweeps the lea,
Where late the snow lay spread.
And now 'tis a whistle I hear,
The ploughman's cheery fife,
A whistle hearty and clear,
Full of the music of life.
And the sick one, gray and thin,
Quoth she, "The door swing wide,
And let the brave friend in,
That speaks to me outside."

WHEN RED THE MAPLE BLOOMS.

WHEN red the maple blooms again,
And alder catkins fringe the lane,
Then faintly horns are heard to blow
— heard to blow — heard to blow,
Come forth and greet the greenwood!
(Echo) Come forth and greet the greenwood!

When mossy nooks once more are green,
And rippling runs the brook between,
Then faintly horns are heard to blow
— heard to blow — heard to blow.
Come forth and greet the greenwood!
(Echo) Come forth and greet the greenwood!

When maids and men may wander free,
And in shy spots the blossoms see,
Then faintly horns are heard to blow,
— heard to blow — heard to blow
Come forth and greet the greenwood!
(Echo) Come forth and greet the greenwood!

O SWEET MAY!

O, so coy is she, sweet May!
Sweet as dew that will not stay, —
Loved of all the knightly race,
Who would give her choicest place, —
Yet would she her bower close keep,
Asking but abroad to peep :
Like the nimble warbler * seen
Flashing thro' the virgin green,
To the covert and the shade
By the firs and hemlocks made :
Like the *linnæa* † for the few
Who have known the trysting true
In the mazes, where the rude
Do not with their steps intrude :
Like a thought that lightly sits,
Then away as lightly flits, —
Leaving one awhile to dream
Of the shapes that do but seem.

* Blackburnian.

† Twinflower.

RAKE CLEAN.*

Quoth Ralph to his father, the farmer,
“Such hay there never was seen.
How shall we care for it, father?”
Said the father: “My son, rake clean,
Rake clean, rake clean, —
We have need of it all, I ween.”

“But the mows have not space enough, father,
To hold such abundance between
The floor and the comb of the building.”
Quoth the farmer: “My son, rake clean,
Rake clean, rake clean, —
We can care for it all, I ween.”

Then the seasons flew by (and the harvest
Good service that Winter had been),
And again in the field were the toilers,
And still said the farmer: “Rake clean,
Rake clean, rake clean, —
We have need of it all, I ween.”

But the lad gazed distressfully round him,
“Less hay,” said he, “never was seen,
The cattle will surely be stinted.”
Quoth the farmer: “My son, rake clean,
Rake clean, rake clean, —
We shall find there’s sufficient, I ween.”

* Permission of Harper Bros.

THE SUMMER RAIN.

How restful is the rain !
How filled with hope again,
 Beneath the silvery tears,
 The long-faint land appears !
How restful is the rain !

How restful is the rain !
 To see the roses red,
 Around and overhead,
 Upon their blushes wear
 The dewy diamond tear, —
 To view the lilies white,
 Like stars at dead of night,
 Upon yon darkened pool,
 So fresh and fair and cool ;
 Whilst Zephyrus from the hills
 The opened chamber fills
 With odors rich or rare,
 That new-distill'd are, —
 As I securely sit,
 And soothing visions flit
 Thro' the kingdom of my own,
 In the stillness all alone, —
How restful is the rain !

ON BOARD YACHT "FIREFLY."

WE see the bristling rocks close by,
The white-cap waves are combing high;
It were a little thing to die
 With this great throb of ecstasy.

"Ready about!" the captain cries,
And, "Hard a lee!" The brave boat flies
Round on her heel, — and on she lies
 Upon the waves triumphantly.

We, perched to windward, sitting see
The waters wash upon her lee;
But little for her fate fear we;
 On, on we go, right bonnily.

All of a sudden drops the gale, —
The night draws near; a large moon pale
Upriseth slowly like a sail, —
 And we at anchor dreamily.

AN AUGUST IDYL.

How beautiful the morning blossoms out !
Joy springs anew to see the freshened lawn,
The veilings of the sombre mist withdrawn,
The nodding dandelions' gold doth flout
The lingering spectres of dismay or doubt
That would possess the fields : the meads tho' shorn
Still yield the succory ; — or how were one forlorn
With pink-cap mallows and the asters stout ?

The kite-leaf birches twinkle
Shedding the dew sprinkle, —
The willows lift their tresses
At the same caresses,
As the zephyrs fly
Briskly by :
The spangles of the poplars are ablaze,
Of late embosomed in the darkling haze.

And all the air doth carry
What might no longer tarry, —
Pomona's faint forecast of vintage days.

MORN IN MID-AUTUMN.

LATE climbs the sun, athwart the lane,
Etched boles of oak and pine succeed ;
Brown needles strewn, the crimson stain,
Impress the tale of Autumn's speed.

White-sprinkled frost the meadows rule,
Save claim of spots by drench of dew ;
Gray vapors shroud the ice-skimmed pool,
And mar the reedy, mirrored view.

From stubbled field the partridge whirs,
Or back to cover darts the quail ;
Wild screams the jay — the echo stirs —
As though at silence he would rail.

The chickadee's thin pipe of cheer,
The peewee bird's complaining note,
A prelude sound to days austere,
To fated leaves ere down they float.

No more the gaze with gleams regaled
Of golden-rod in pasture spread ;
The asters meek, their purple paled,
Declare the halcyon days have fled.

THE FALL CRICKET.*

'Tis the fall cricket
In yon bushy thicket,
Minstrel but one,
Whose song lingers on.

Past is the cheering
Of bird in the clearing;
The thrush in the shade
Breathes no serenade.

Slender and sober,
A pipe of October,
One burden obtains, —
A new spirit reigns.

Ah, it is failing,
The clethra's exhaling;
Strange odors betray
Damp mould and decay.

Soon will surrender,
The woodlands their splendor,
The maple and vine
Their crimson resign;

Beauty and glory
Will be but a story, —
The leaf in the stream
Tells the way of all dream.

The gay, bent on pleasure,
The rich in love's treasure, —
The lone one to-day
Will vanish away.

* A small greenish insect known locally as here given.

THE CHANGING LEAF.

THE elm is turning yellow,
The creepers rich with stain ;
The frost hath fringed the maple
With crimson fire again ;
I hear the crisp corn rustle that's gathered into sheaves,
And my heart stands still a moment to think of all it leaves.

I pick the honeyed clover
That lingers at my feet ;
Ah, me ! long years are over
Since first I found it sweet.
I hear the crisp corn rustle that's gathered into sheaves,
And my heart stands still a moment to think of what it
leaves.

The sadness and the sweetness
I ponder o'er and o'er ;
Nor sighing nor the gladness
Is as it was before.
I hear the crisp corn rustle that's gathered into sheaves,
And my heart stands still a moment to think of all it leaves.

A PETITION.

WEAK faith is mine, alas ! small is my worth !
But oh, from out my inmost soul I pray,
That I may ne'er so wander on the way
To lose the wondrous beauty of the earth,
Or fail the healing comfort of its girth
Of field and flower, — such as I know to-day,
Moving amidst the meadows green, or gay
With violets sown or buds of kindred birth,
To greet the May ! Come age or indigence,
But keep me fresh with Nature, O ye skies !
That I may ever have one sure defence
Beyond the undoing of or tears or sighs ;
And like this swallow be with ravished sense
Casting flash-shadows as he past me flies.

TO THE MASTER SHAKSPERE.

Self-love, my liege, is not so vile a sin as self-neglecting.—HENRY V.

I

FIRST in the first of Arts, great Master! I,
All glowing from thy glory-shedding verse,
May not resist the promptings to rehearse
How much and oft thy grace I magnify.
O, feeble praise! not meant with that to vie
Which into being gifted thought may nurse.
Or culture's power — the finished line or terse —
But only such as labor's child may try, —
Though all heart-warm. Herein at least no rein
Upon my lips, nor fear of any frown
Where love hath place: in his triumphant train
I move secure, unchallenged as thine own:
For this thy magic — one that ne'er shall wane —
Or peer or peasant may enjoy thy crown.

II

Bard of the World! Lord of the Mind and Heart!
Whose songs all fruit of human knowledge blend,
Sorrow and Joy: Beginning and the End, —
All destiny! How shall I speak in part
The gratitude I owe thy gracious art.
What time with thee the speeding hours I spend,
For laughter quickened or for tears which start!
So shall he most thine own anointed be,
And hail the sweet deliverance of song. —
Such song as thine when Nature did thee greet, —
Will he but own a kindred constancy:
This were to show thee love of all most strong;
This were perchance thine own rare Muse to meet.

ON A VASE OF FERNS.

WHAT marvel here of shape and shade of fern !
What charm hath Nature given them, what the hand
Of art that hath their crested grouping planned !
Fain would I let the fair bestower learn
How fond a prize is hers who could discern
So well my pleasure, and would thus command
My town-tired eyes, that I may happy stand
Whilst much-loved brook and brake again return.
Magical creatures ! Yet too sad it seems
To steal you from those meditative shades
Where dwelt ye nun-like with your dainty dreams
On mossy bed, to where such life soon fades,
Like poet parted from his native streams
And woods and hills and flower-besprinkled glades.

AN EASTER MORN.

WITHIN AN OLD FANE.

LONG centuries hath this sacred building borne
Itself exempt from tempest or decay,
Past power of skill now doomed to wear away, —
Thus ever bringeth Time man's boast to scorn.
But, all intact — ever as vernal morn
With freshness glowing — ever as sure as day —
The spirit's altar bideth, pass what may ;
Or else, indeed, the heart-rent were forlorn.
Yea, Trust holds strong whate'er perturb life's stream !
Unchecked the steps will to the rite repair
Of Him who wears the mystic crown supreme,
And bodes them fair, beyond all mortal share ; —
Lo ! see Him stand within Faith's fold of dream,
With answering signal to one waiting there.

A DAY FROM CHURCH.

“CONSIDER THE LILIES —”

FORGIVE me, friend, one day I take from thee,
I so sequestered from the smiling sky,
Bound to the limits of my ledger dry, —
How may I shun the breezy, meadowy lea,
The divination fond awaiting me
Of blade or bird? Thou shalt not traitor cry,
Nor count me one that would unthinking fly
A proper fold. But I this morn would be
Without or friend or guide — quiet, alone —
Saving one Presence, whose enduring feet
Wander where'er the rural landscape shows, —
So catch, my soul, the uncontaminate tone
Of praise or prayer, — this linnet's * carol sweet,
This silent ministry of the unfolding rose.

* Purple finch.

ON SONG.

I

YEA, song is sweet, and in itself a pride, —
Though bitter ofttimes 'tis to woo deaf ear,
Or run the gauntlet of a neighbor's sneer,
Or comes the bantling back of all denied
The meed of love. Yet he who hath relied
On fostering Muse will not for any fear
Forego her worship, but esteem her dear
As life or aught, and trusting so, abide
Neglect or scorn. Save, O my heart, this care,
That I may have of grace if but to win
One soul from sorrow, or possess the power
To keep it proof against the evil snare,
Or that which would assail sweet peace within;
Ay, this alone my song's sufficient dower!

II

One thing to me more dear is e'en than song, —
Tho' it would seem to me of song begot, —
More than the artist-fancy, or the lot
To be fame-crowned, — tho' I should go along
My way unblest, to feel contumely's thong,
With nothing writ but what myself would blot,
The spectre of a thing to be forgot.
Or all that one may know of grief or wrong
Attend my Muse, — oh! rather let this be,
So am I but exempt one single thrust
That would accuse me of abandoned plan
To walk the world of every shackle free, —
Free from the beggar's tread, or any rust
Of soul or aught becoming not a man.

THE REJOINDER.

O YE who see the poet ever vain,
His chief intent upon a jingling sound
That shall to his own special praise redound,
Bellman of his own heart, recounting plain
What others shrink to say, a varying strain,
Yet ever with the same pursuing found, —
Oh, hear me that your sneers do less abound !
I would for one with laurelled singers reign,
If so I might : Yet am I ample proof —
This midnight hour attest me — to sit here
Unmindful of aught else — of mine own fate —
That men approve me or they keep aloof —
Await me fortune or be penury near —
So may I have these crumbs from Art's choice plate.

THE OLD TRAIL.

WITHIN the precincts of this fence remains
The one faint vestige of the ancient trail,
Dim-seen beneath the blue-stem's * reedy veil ;
Lonely it lies, a prisoner close in chains,
No more with part upon the savage plains,
A guide and succorer of each pilgrim pale
That courts the heights and shuns the timbered dale ; —
Now yoked to scene of home and ripening grains
Its use is o'er : yet while these ruts are viewed
Not even the clanking of the school-house bell,
Nor screech of engine, may undo the spell
Of caravans that break the solitude,
And wolves and Indians skulking after prey
When come the shadows with the close of day.

* A species of prairie grass.

A FISHER GIRL.

ON Calais' shore one breezy morning spent
I saw a charming fisher-maiden stride
Across a runlet of the backing tide,
Bare-legged, bare-armed, in smiling radiance bent —
Mocking the wind's rude gambols as she went —
On townward progress from the vessel's side,
Bearing aloft her load in simple pride,
Undreaming she the spell her presence lent.
Pink as the sea-shell strewn along the way,
Fresh as the sea-flakes tossed upon the cheek,
She was a challenge to the world's pretence,
Crowned with the best of those whose given sway
Asks naught that trick or tinsel may bespeak,
Graced with the gifts of health and innocence.

THE PROFFERED PSALTER.

“DIVINE GRACE IN THE FORM OF BEATRICE.”

NEVER so solaced and so served I stood,
Sharing the psalter with that stranger maid,
Myself unknown, whose feet had feebly strayed,
Perchance to feel some spell of pious good
Breathed from the clerkly desk or quietude
Within the temple's cool, subduing shade,
Which vainly had my heart long hours essayed
To greet elsewhere in answer to my mood.
Pale Star of Calm! So cam'st thou at my need
Like that pure vision of the poet's theme,
Thy gentle lineage and thy legend told
In the sweet token of thy gracious deed, —
To lead me on toward the fuller dream,
Safe in the shelter of the enviable fold.

AT EVENING.

ONCE more bequeathed the balm of evening rest,
Calm, cool, refreshful, as the sun goes down,
Whose smile (erstwhile withdrawn for wrack and frown
And muttered thunder) gilds each moistened crest
Of woodland green, the sire himself possesst
Of yonder mountain range, about him thrown
A splendor of rare tapestry, unknown
Save where 'tis woven in the magic West.

Brave gift is his who owns both sky and swale,
They reck not of who keep the nether rung,
Drugged by the mists, their bondage fain must know.
Behold! the moon hath burst upon the vale
And shades take flight; great Jupiter hath hung
His pilot lamp aloft for worlds below.

THE SONGS THAT SING THEMSELVES

ONE time I deemed the Muse's service lay
In chiselled line, or phrase of courtly tone,
And still I would some lustre were mine own,
Or Attic worth, whence Milton hath his sway ;
Or Shelley charms ; — but I must native stay,
Though I should carol for myself alone,
As one for little reason to be known,
Awaiting what may chance a later day :
Content meanwhile — for mine own ease at least —
To feel the grace of song tho' lightly writ,
Won of the dawn or of the twilight rest, —
Some simple words sufficing for a feast,
When the full heart with fervor pure is lit, —
For surely songs that sing themselves are blest !

TO THE EAST WIND IN SUMMER.

FAMILIAR Spirit, air of the salty East
That hath so oft aroused my discontent,
My thoughts on wanderings from thee ever bent
Thro' the late lingering season, loved the least
Of all thy tribe that serveth man and beast,
Is this indeed thyself that now art sent
A friend to us in feverish city pent,
Lifting our spirits, liberal as a feast?
Oh, I for this will bear thee much in mind!
And when again thou tak'st thy wintry throne,
To have the world thy keen-edged sword bemoan,
And vent its rage that thou art all unkind,
I will proclaim another thing for thee,
The boon these sultry days thou wert to me.

IN A SANCTUARY OF THE BIRDS.

INTO this boschage it were well who went
To pass in gentle wise, with no rude tread
Or sound intemperate ; for gently bred
The holders of the fief, wont to resent
The clownish presence, or the idler bent
On ruthless pastime ; but if love have led,
And quiet heart, the token will be spread,
And Welcome give its grace the sacrament.
Then will be learned the littleness of Art
(Nathless doth Art a good ofttimes bestow)
While something of herself she doth disclose —
Chief Muse of all — her verity impart —
Where brook and song and soul have common flow
In that fine key she owneth of repose.

LATE IN JULY.

A FERVID face it was the sun did wear,
Till shielded by the slanting, shimmering veil
Of clouds irriguous, bred of the gale,
Bearing a gift benign — tho' roll and glare
Jove's dread artillery : pellucid, fair,
Like to a primrose now the evening pale, —
Or her of Eden with the conscious tale
Of beauty's queenliness — pure as the air.
The peeping stars admonish day is spent,
And prompt the pathway downward from the hill :
A faint waft cometh of witch-hazel scent,*
(Ah me, remembrance ! puissant with me still !)
While one faint strain — for one sole listener meant —
The brave song-sparrow's fain all void would fill.

* This proceeding from the stem, the blossom appearing much later.

THE CLIMB.

Things won are done ; joy's soul lies in the doing. —

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

Up, up the path we toiled, intent to make
The crest where sate our hope, a sunlit height ;
From lands below a dome of heavenly light,
Roofing the dusky sides of wood and brake :
On, on we trudged ; nor yet averse to take
The steps aside, won by the woodcock's flight,
The yellow blooms that come in Summer's wake,—
Till high we paused, — so stood the one of old
On Pisgah's top, beholding beautified
The fertile landscape with its fruitful crown,
The promise of the future lot foretold ;
In all save this our dream quite verified,
The looking up charmed more than looking down.

MONADNOCK IN AUTUMN.

By low-walled fields the way familiar lies,
"Twixt yellowing elms — chief grace of road and lane —
And formal maples, crimson-cheeked again,
And mantling ivies tinged with Tyrian dyes,
And pomp of golden blooms, — till on the rise
Found fair the seat: below, the village plain;
Uplifted white the spire with burnished vane,
Dark pines around; above, the dreaming skies!
Sweet Solitude! remote from noise and crowd:
Heard but the tinkling cow-bell, or the creak
Of the lone cricket: far, in a shroud
Of purple swathed the rounded hills lie meek,
One looming up pyramidal, the proud
Monadnock, and sits glory on his peak.

OVERLOOKING THE CHARLES; OR A
LEAVE-TAKING.

THE river mist is rising from below,
And soon will vanish all the vale's delight;
From our fair vantage ground will pass the sight
Of meadow stretches — nearer maize fields go —
The bordering barberries with their jewels grow
Amorphous, caught in the common plight, —
At one with her whom to the lower night
Pluto hath haled, to taste her draught of woe.
Fain would the moonlight's incantation sweet
The temper move to feed on fancies gay;
But list! the boding owl from his retreat
Doth bid the errant spirit sober stay;
While sounds — with flutterings that bespeak her feet —
The wierd, sad strain of Autumn on the way.

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